

Straight from the "Hart"

March 5, 2023



Welcome to Hartland UMC's "Straight from the "Hart"". We are glad you are participating in today's time of worship by reading this service script.

Our Lenten Series is called "Journey of Stones" and is loosely based on a book by the same title, written by Steven Molin.

A Lenten Confession and Prayer (L – Lay Reader C – Congregation)

L: In the year that hope in human leadership dies, we need a fresh vision of the Lord sitting high and exalted on a throne with the angel-seraphim calling to each other:

C: "More holy that the holiest holiness is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory."

L: At the sound of their voices, we feel the foundations tremble and the doorposts shake. Smoke fills the air.

C: Woe to us. Kneeling before him, we realize how small and sinful we are.

L: Even so, Lord, touch us with your burning presence that we may be made clean and whole.

C: Send us to build the faith, to do your will, to accomplish your mission.

L: We will continue to love even in the face of rejection and ridicule.

C: We will do this because we are confident that there will be a rebirth, for you promised that you will always have your people.

Inspired by Isaiah 6:1-13

Money Verse Our money verse comes from the first verses of Matthew (6:1-4). Jesus is teaching. Be especially careful when doing your good deeds so that you don't make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but you will have no reward from the God who made you. When you do good to other people, don't call attention to yourself like those playactors who treat prayer meeting and street corner alike as a stage, acting compassionate as long as someone is watching, playing to the crowds to be honored and admired. Truly I tell you, they have had all the reward they are going to get. No, when you give to charity, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Don't think about how it looks, just do

it quietly and unobtrusively. Then your Father, who conceived you in love, who sees what is done in secret, working behind the scenes, will reward you.

(NIV, MSG, PHILLIPS)

Opening Prayer Holy God, we give you ourselves with hearts open to the power of your Spirit. Through us, and these gifts we place on your altar and lay at your feet, may others come to see that when anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation, that the old way ends, and new life begins for everyone. Amen.

ad from © 2004 Brian Wren in UM Worship & Song Leader's Edition (W&S)

Call to Worship Come to claim the freedom Christ offers by his self-giving on the cross. Through our worship, may the Son who shared his life grant us grace -- that we might share our life. May the Holy Spirit empower us to be only and always for God and others -- that we may be able to serve together in faith, hope, and love. (ad. from UM W&S)



Music We enter God's presence aware of who we are before him, but also aware of his gracious mercy let's sing...

Holy, Holy, Holy

Words: Reginald Heber Music: John B. Dykes

4. Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!

All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth and sky and sea.

Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty, God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

2. Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,

casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;

cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee, which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

3. Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,

though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see,

only thou art holy; there is none beside thee, perfect in power, in love and purity.

Theme When in seminary I was taught when preaching that you were supposed to "hide behind the cross", a phrase that means the sermon is always supposed to be about Jesus, and you don't belong in it at all. Then later I was I was taught you were supposed to make your sermons personal by putting yourself into it. And then I was told that if you are in your sermon, you can't use a positive example from your life or you might come across like you are bragging and making it all about

yourself. That only leaves you with negative examples, so then when I told a negative example, I was accused of being self-deprecating, and teaching everyone to hate themselves, by my example. I was also told that I should be willing to be transparent and vulnerable, so people know you are real and have some of the same life issues that everyone else does. And not because of that rule, but because I happened to be in a Bible Study, I think it was in my first United Methodist Church, just a young pastor – I don't remember the topic, but it was probably something about some Bible person, perhaps Job, who was having doubts about things, and I said simply, "I have doubts once in a while." I was told, "No, you are a pastor, a spiritual leader, you aren't allowed to have any doubts. So much for being open, honest, and vulnerable. Then there were people who felt we should start a ministry for disabled people because we had some in our family – but also an overwhelming push from the local church I was in at the time others to try and confess it like it was sin, and to pray for its cure (and though well intended, it came with the implication that a lack of cure meant a lack of faith), and that we needed to hide and bury our family because we were, what they called, "damaged goods".

The point is that everyone seems to have a rule about what is the right path to take in someone's profession or life, and often those rules, even coming from experts, often collide in incompatible ways. It reminds me of the place where Jesus said, "... we made happy music, but you wouldn't dance! We made sad music, but you wouldn't cry! For John came, fasting, not drinking – so they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came, eating freely and drinking – so they say, "Aha, A glutton and a drunkard! A friend of tax-collectors and sinners!" (Matthew 11:16-19a) It is the old "strung over a barrel that is being squeezed by a rock and a hard place" scenario. No matter what you do it is perceived as wrong.

Our world is already difficult enough to navigate because of the complication of selfishness and sin. People who conscientiously try to navigate life well by following the laws and the rules, and the guides and the advice of experts – can sometimes find themselves in a confusing, heavy, wearisome place. We'll hear more about that later, but for now, let's just say that God's love is always wooing us, calling us, drawing us to him, wanting to go through it with us. And often he has placed people in our lives so that we can know that we are not alone. Jesus invited people who are feeling the weight of life to come to him because his yoke was easy and his burden was light. (Matthew 11:28-30) A yoke is not an egg in this place. It is a piece of farming equipment that connects two cows or oxen or horses

together so that when they do the hard work of pulling a heavy wagon or plowing, for examples, they don't have to pull all by themselves, but another carries the load with them. And in some cases, it is a big animal and a small animal, and the yoke is designed so that the smaller animal has a smaller share of the weight – and if Jesus is the big one, we get the small share – he will carry a lot of the extra load for us.

Intro to and Reading 1

When disobedience entered the picture with Adam and Eve; one of the first things God told them was that life was going to be messed up and there is no going back – and that the consequences of continuing to ignore his will would make life a heavy burden. The second thing God did was try to lighten that load by caring for them, by going through it with them, and helping them make a new start. God continues to offer this through Jesus – hear his longing for humanity, old and new -- through God's actions and Jesus' words...



Isn't this the Lord who created you, who made you and gave you a place on Earth? He is your Father, who made you his! It was he who formed and prepared you! Dig into the past, understand your roots... God himself took charge of his people as his personal concern and heritage. He found his people out in the wilderness, in an empty, howling, windswept wasteland. He threw his arms around him, lavished attention on them, protected and cared for him as the apple of his eye. He was like an eagle that stirs up her nest, hovering over her young, that spreads out her wings, lifting them into the air and carries them as she flies. God alone led his people, he made them ride on the heights of the earth.

Deuteronomy 32:6-13a (15), (NIV, CJB, MSG)

[Unfortunately, the text then goes on to say how these blessed people abandoned the God who made them, rejecting, even scorning and mocking the Rock of their salvation. And this pattern was alive and well in the days of Jesus. Jesus conveys, through a different bird metaphor, the desire to do what God always wants -- to bring his people back to himself where he can care for them]. Someone warned Jesus to steer clear of Jerusalem because Herod wanted to kill him. He responded:

I will keep on [fulfilling my mission] and on the third day I will reach my goal. I must keep travelling today, tomorrow and the next day; because it is unthinkable that a prophet should be killed outside of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to you! How often I've longed to gather your children, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you refused and turned away! And now God is abandoning your house to you. You will not see me again until the day you say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

Luke 13:32b-34 (NIV, CJB, MSG)

Music For those of us who are blessed, who don't turn their back on God, who don't want to be abandoned to their own devices, Jesus comes to lighten our load and lift us from what weighs us down.

On Eagle's Wings

Words: Michael Joncas, 1979 (Ex. 19:4)

Music: Michael Joncas, 1979; harm. by Carlton R. Young, 1988

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And God will raise you up on eagle's wings, bear you on the breath of dawn,
make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of God's hand.

And you will raise us up on eagle's wings, bear us on the breath of dawn,
make us to shine like the sun, and hold us in the palm of your hand.

Pastor's Prayer Dear God of peace, we relax in you because you are the strength of our life and you are more powerful than anything that may happen to us in this world. Even though temptation sets up camp around us, even though it seems disaster looks for every opportunity to rise up against us, we have set our confidence in you. You lift us up and you put us on stable ground where you shelter and protect us as we shine in your glory.

We continue to seek after you, to behold your beauty, to inquire of you about our spiritual progress toward you. This is why we gather to sing to you, pray to you, read and learn more about you. Teach us your ways so that we may see through and avoid wise sounding (but errant) teachings, and relish in your truth and experience your goodness. We muster our strength and courage and wait for your answers. **Praises and Petitions** There are many who are on our hearts and minds today, some spoken in past weeks, many unspoken. We pray for all those unnamed among us -- and beyond us -- who are recovering from illness or injury or facing other types of challenges or setbacks in their lives, for these and others

that on our hearts and minds, we pause briefly to lift our prayers to you. [Pause]

Now Lord, continue to shape us as we respond to you through simplicity and prayer, sharpen our hunger for your friendship and our thirst for the living water of life offered through Jesus; that we may be fruitful servants within your creation, to build our relationship with you and in so doing being transformed to live as Jesus taught us to pray **LORD's PRAYER**

Intro to and Bible Reading

Earlier, we heard God speak the heavy consequences of not following his will, yet yearning for his people, wooing the people he had blessed -- to come back to him. In that point in history (with Moses), they had gladly taken the blessings but then turned away from God.

Now God is again yearning to woo his people back through Jesus. But the religious leadership didn't think they had neither wandered nor rejected God. They saw themselves as religious purists. If the Law called for a fast, they began early and ended late. If it called for a tithe, they not only gave a tithe they gave offerings that exceeded expectations. Everyone knew it, for they intentionally went out of their way to be examples to all. They condemned everyone who did not do it their way. All this was done in the name of a vigorous faith.

Jesus is invited to a lunch with these people. To their dismay, Jesus describes their behaviors from a very different point of view -- and Jesus warns them to beware of coming consequences...We'll just hit the highlights...

A Pharisee invited Jesus to dinner. Jesus went in and reclined at the table. The Pharisee was shocked that Jesus didn't begin by doing the ritual washing before the meal. The Lord said to him, "Now then, you Pharisees buff the surface of your cups and plates so they sparkle, but inside you are full of greed and secret wickedness. Did not the One who made the outside also make the inside?"

But now as for what is inside you – give generously to the poor, and then your lives will be clean, not just your dishes and hands.

"Woe to you [a phrase that means "how terrible it will be", "what sorrow awaits you"] Woe to you Pharisees because you keep meticulous accounts for tithing on every nickel and dime you get but find loopholes to neglect basic matters of justice and God's love."

Woe to you because you love the best seats in the synagogues and being

[reverentially] greeted in public places.

Woe to you because you are like unmarked graves which people walk over without knowing it.”

One of the religious scholars spoke up: “Teacher, do you realize that in saying these things, you’re insulting us also?”

Jesus replied, “Woe to you experts in the law because you load people down with rules and regulations, burdens they can hardly handle, but you your-selves will not lift one finger to help them.

“Woe to you because you build tombs for the prophets, but they are built more as monuments to your ancestors that murdered them.

Woe to you law experts because you have taken away the key to knowledge. Instead of unlocking doors, you lock them. You yourselves have not entered, and you also have stopped those who are trying to enter!”

When Jesus left the table and went outside, the religious scholars and Pharisees went into a rage and began to oppose him fiercely. They went over everything he said, plotting how they could besiege him with questions, provoking him to express his views on all sorts of subjects, laying traps to catch him in something he might say.

Highlights of Luke 11:37b-54 (NIV,CJB,MSG)

Music One reason we love Jesus is not only that he wants to lift us up in his love for us before we ever loved him, but that he wanted to eliminate the woeful red tape that allegedly qualifies us to be with him. Before the sermon Let’s sing

O How I Love Jesus

Text: Frederick Whitfield Music: 19th cent. USA melody

1. There is a name I love to hear, I love to sing its worth;
it sounds like music in my ear, the sweetest name on earth.

Refrain:

O how I love Jesus, O how I love Jesus,
O how I love Jesus, because he first loved me!

2. It tells me of a Savior's love, who died to set me free;
it tells me of his precious blood, the sinner's perfect plea.

(Refrain)

3. It tells of one whose loving heart can feel my deepest woe;
who in each sorrow bears a part that none can bear below.

(Refrain)

Sermon Hypocrisy Stone: Woos and Woes

Note: the boxed parts were not read during the sermon, but are placed to make it easier to reference the verses being referred to as we move through the sermon)

Lent is not about how prosperous and comfortable our faith can make us; but it is about increasing our quality as people as we follow the self-sacrificing Jesus to Jerusalem and the cross. The early readings and the song we just sang tells us to what great lengths God wants to woo us back into a relationship with him, that last reading we heard tells us just how upset God gets when people try to block that path. We have a lot of material and not a lot of time so let's just jump right in...

Jesus accepts an invitation to a Pharisees home but ignores the proverb "When in Rome...", (because that didn't become a saying until 300 years later) "When in Rome do as they do in Rome". Perhaps it was to make a prophetic point, he disrespectfully ignores the custom of *ceremonial* washing. (This had nothing to do with hygiene, it was a ceremonial rite performed before the blessing of a meal). The host raises an eyebrow, and perhaps even verbalizes his surprise that Jesus did not follow the traditional Jewish custom.

And Jesus launches into a tirade of "Well this is what's wrong with you" statements. He waxes eloquent in a speech of "Woe". As we heard, a word of grief and pity. Woe is me. I'm hurting, I'm experiencing loss, I'm in trouble, or in this case -- you will be *if you* don't "woe-ah" what you are doing and get off your high horses.

This is not the ever-patient, kindhearted, good humored, full of love and forgiveness Jesus with whom we are so familiar. We are much more used to God wooing us than woe-ing us. This may be why this passage isn't even listed as a lectionary. (The lectionary is that book that was developed a long time ago that creates a 3 year reading cycle of bible passages, and if you get through the entire reading cycle, you will have read all of what are considered the most important passages of the Bible. This passage is not in there. We like to forget these scenes even took place. We isolate ourselves from them by trivializing the story to an irrelevant ancient history lesson: "We don't ceremonial wash anyway so what has that got to do with us?" and we like to dismiss the whole thing out of hand and quickly move on to something else.

But just for fun, this lent, let's look at this passage as if it really did mean something for us, as if it really mattered. One of our former bishops once quoted: "We like to report on sin so long as we are not the subject." Today I am the subject

and you are the subject - but you are not my subject, and I am not your subject; we are all our own subject of the day. Each to our own *self*-examination, not everybody else.

THE INSIDE MATTERS

<p>The Lord said, Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. Luke 11:39</p>

Jesus speaks of a cup and dish and uses it to make the point that **what is inside matters**. A traveling preacher spent Saturday night at the home of a church family. The wife prepared breakfast by gathering eggs from the hen house. She put the eggs in the boiling water and the preacher noticed the eggs still had "barnyard" on them. But he knew the shells would protect the inner eggs he would be eating, so he wasn't too worried about that. She asked if he wanted a cup of coffee. He agreed. She watched as she put the instant coffee grounds into a cup and then pour the dirty, almost now boiling egg water into it. And that is when -- what is inside the cup becomes more important than what is outside.

Jesus teaches that what is in the heart is what is important, and sooner or later, what is in the heart will come to the surface (See Mark 7:19ff, Luke 6:45). It may come out in an unguarded moment, under pressure, under temptation, under a lot of reasons that may feel like it is beyond our control. But it is like a saturated sponge, it is full, and eventually a little squeeze here and a little squeeze there and something starts to leak out. The premise of a TV show called *Lie to Me* is that there are nonverbal facial tells that are universal and beyond the control of the person as they react to situations and questions. Regardless of what comes out of the mouth, they know the truth from what's on their face. They call it "leakage". I don't think I would go that far – I don't think faces can be read as consistently and accurately as they claimed to do in that show, but the Bible is clear that what is in the heart will come out into the open. (Luke 12:1-3)

WOE 1: GIVING, BUT NOT FOR JUSTICE OR LOVE

<p>But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you. Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue, and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone. Luke 11:41-42</p>
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Jesus was exposing a disconnect between their heart's motivations and lives that those people presented to others. They gave generously, even on things that were

so small the law didn't require a tithe on them. But Jesus saw that they did not compassionately give out of concern for justice or love; but for the prestige of being magnanimous benefactors, for the purpose of buying praise and power. Jesus says inner purity means giving to those who are in need with the motivation to help spread God's love and justice to them, with the joy of helping the receiver, because we truly believe in the cause, or the organization, or the people, or the person, and because we believe in God – not for a self-serving motivation.

WOE 2: LOVE IMPORTANCE

Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces.	Luke 11:43
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This leads to the second woe about seeking prime seats and honored greetings when in public. You've probably seen the ruins of Roman amphitheaters. Stone benches and chairs carved into the side of hill descending to the bottom, just like a modern theater, then at the bottom there is a high raised platform. And the Roman dignitaries would come down and sit in the front row "seats of honor". If they wanted to see the show, their necks would be sore by the time they left - but they didn't come to watch the show, they came to be seen by everybody who was at the show. And that same cultural norm crept into the synagogue and bled out into the streets. They went everywhere trying to receive attention and praise from people.

Today, except in certain formal events, seating positions don't carry the same kind of importance or elevation of status. But the spirit of why we are at an event is alive and well. Is it to be seen, or to meaningfully participate and support by our presence, our time, our talents, our prayers, and our resources?

WOE 3: TYPE OF INFLUENCE

Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without knowing it.	Luke 11:44
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This leads to how we influence others and the third woe about being unmarked graves. This one is a little trickier if we don't know the background. In those days, if you came in contact with a grave, you were declared unclean and had to isolate for seven days. If you didn't get sick after 7 days, they assumed you were not infected nor contagious and so were considered clean again and you could go about your business. To avoid this whole mess, tombstones were often whitewashed so people could easily see them and steer clear so they wouldn't

have to go through that isolation. We all know how much we hate that, right? Jesus is telling these people that they are unmarked graves, that they are spiritually dead, but they don't show it, so their dead rotting faith, contaminates everyone who unknowingly comes in contact with them and sits under their teaching and are led astray.

WOE 4: LAWS: BURDENS OR HELPS

One of the experts in the law answered him, "Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also." Jesus replied, and you experts in the law, woe to you because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.
Luke 11:45-46

Jesus' meal companions were offended by this attack on their well-intentioned traditions that were (at least initially) developed to prevent rebellion against God and national disaster. They didn't believe -- or at least they said they couldn't believe -- that they were violating the spirit of God's law. Jesus answers with the fourth woe, how their technicalities and minutia that they said were safeguards to help fulfill God's will had sucked the life and joy and meaningfulness out of a relationship with God. And on top of that, they gave them no tools with which to help meet these unbearable demands, and on top of that, they developed exceptions and loopholes so they themselves didn't have to do what they were making everybody else do.

Too many, too often, ignore rules that are designed to bring mutual justice and love and respect - that prevent lawlessness and chaos - and even seek to eliminate such laws or design structures that circumvent the basic principles of justice and love. And if they are called out on it, the answer is often denial, or diversion, or they say that the law is not just and so we feel free to break it or change it.

On the other hand, if they think the "rules" bolster their position over others, then they never stop talking about them – rules that have been born in the heritage and have been around for generations (never mind that they have twisted and manipulated them to their own purposes of power).

WOE 5: WHO IS HONORED HOW?

Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your ancestors who killed them. So you testify that you approve of what your ancestors did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs... Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world...
Luke 11:47-48, 50ff

This idea that they were allegedly honoring the traditions leads Jesus to talk about the tomb memorials they had built for the prophets. In spite of how noble it looks and sounds, honoring the Old Testament prophets with tomb buildings / memorials to honor them and give lip service to the authenticity of the message the prophets had brought (which is why prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah were in their Scriptures in the first place). But by their lives, Jesus is saying they still reject the authentic message because they live more in sync with the people who tortured and killed them rather than living the message of the prophets. In essence, by their memorial tombs of honor, they were saying the only good prophet is a dead one because they were not following their words.

WOE 6: PRIDE OF COMPLICATION

Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.
Luke 11:52

Perhaps part of the reason they didn't listen, and others stopped listening to them, was because these religious legal experts took a simple gospel message (granted, the OT version of that -- the message of God wooing them, and they converted it into something so complex, so difficult, so convoluted, that only experts could figure it out; and even they were not bothering to live what they had figured out. These people quickly dismissed the prophets' teaching, but even more, they went out of their way to quash the threat of truth... lest it interfere with their established patterns of living -- a pattern which left them with all the popularity and power. As Steven Molin put it -- these people wanted sole control of the gate to God. They wanted to determine the rules, to decide who met those rules and who broke them, they wanted to preserve faith the way it was for them -- the way they always like it. They used themselves as the yardstick to measure themselves (that makes it easy, doesn't it?) and also others, though and that made it hard for others...

When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, waiting to catch him in something he might say.
Luke 11:53-54

And this is why they rejected the prophets who brought a true message of God, and it is why their cold, hard hearts rejected Jesus who gave God's message as well.

In my first Methodist charge, the altar candles were spring loaded. There is a metal tube that shows the shaft of the candle you see. The wax candle goes inside

this tube, and then as the candle burned down, the spring would push the candle up and up and up -- keeping it at the top of the shaft until they became 1-to-3 inch stubs -- at which point they were replaced with fresh candles. Mrs. Jewett would take the remaining stubs and collect them over the year, and convert them into that year's Advent candles. If she had taken the solid wax stubs and tried to reshape them, you know what would happen, they would crack and break and crumble and they would not meld with the other stubs. But she knew better than to do it that way. She would melt them down and together, and stir in the right color dye, and while they were still warm she would shape them just as she wanted them to be. And then as they cool, they once again become an solid, unbending shape – the desired shape – the Advent candles for that year.

People are kind of like that. They start out very open, ready to believe, flexible to be shaped, but over the years (maybe two or three 😊) we gradually cool into a harder and harder shapes – to the point that we don't want to be confused with facts anymore. The hearts of these religious leaders had hardened to the point where they believed their own rhetoric and their own ways. And once a heart turns to stone, it is very difficult to soften again. It takes humility, sometimes it takes confession. So -- let's do whatever it takes to keep our hearts open and soft and warm – so that the Holy Spirit can shape us into Christ-likeness, into whatever specific shape God would have us become.

Communion

Invitation One way God helps shape us is through remembering his passion and death through Communion. All who desire to be shaped into Christ's life are free to participate. Let's prepare by a time of confession. Let's pray.

Confession Lord, it is so easy to know how we are supposed to answer the questions, and because we know the Sunday School answers, it is easy to think we have passed the examination.

But this is not about knowing the answer, or even wishing we lived the answer, but it is looking deeply within to see if we are truly open – to living Jesus' true message, and if there is some place we are not, to grow more into living as you would have us



live. We seek always to become even more authentic. We don't want to merely keep a prayer list, or to say eloquent words, but to truly pray; We don't want to merely agonize to find nuances to your will, but to obey what we already know. We don't want to merely know what love is, but to truly love. We don't want to sing *as if* we mean it, we want to truly mean it. We don't have to be right all the time but be able to freely admit and adjust when we discover we are wrong.

Meditation – Procession of Stones

Bow your heads and with your stone in your hand. ask yourself the questions. (They are printed in the bulletin so that you will be able to contemplate them on your own later when you have more time), but we will just quickly run through their essence at this point.

If, why, or how do I get distracted from what really matters? little things instead of big things. If, why, or how do I get preoccupied with personal recognition? If, why, or how does our influence sometimes make others worse rather than better? If, why, or how do we make rules that make burdens heavier rather than lighter? If, why, or how do I make it more difficult for others to find God's truth?

Lord, help us to understand ourselves, and your forgiving love, and extend it to each other as well. Help us to be sincere as we take this stone of hypocrisy... of one up-man-ship, of legalism, of negative influence, of competitiveness, and unite in spirit as we lay them down at the foot of your cross and let the softening process of our hearts begin – to be shaped as you would have us become. The instruments are going to play in a moment, Think on these questions that I have just read, if nothing comes to mind, use your stone to represent anything that is weighing you down, or another who is weighing on our heart.

Music Once the first verse is completed, we will quietly stand if comfortable and begin singing the first verse, and as we do we will come and place our stones at the foot of this cross that is in front of me. If walking is challenging, you can give your stone to a friend who can carry your burden for you, we are called to do that for each other. After you have placed your stone, you can return to your seat and sit and we will finish the song... then we'll move forward from that point. Let's first listen to as we meditate, and then sing, Cleanse Me.

Cleanse Me

Words: J Edwin Orr Music: Maori melody

1 Search me, O God,
and know my heart today;
Try me, O Savior,
know my thoughts, I pray.
See if there be some wicked way in me;
Cleanse me from ev'ry sin and set me
free.



2 I praise thee, Lord,
for cleansing me from sin;
Fulfill thy Word, and make me pure within.
Fill me with fire where once I burned with shame;
Grant my desire to magnify thy name.

3 Lord, take my life and make it wholly thine;
Fill my poor heart with thy great love divine.
Take all my will, my passion, self, and pride;
I now surrender; Lord, in me abide.

Assurance

Lord, you are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Turn to us and have mercy on us; show your strength on behalf of your servants; save us, because we serve you...(Psalm 86:15-16a) O Creator and mighty God, you have promised strength for the weak, rest for the laborers, light for the way, grace for the trials, help from above, unfailing sympathy, undying love. O Creator and mighty God, help us to continue in your promise.

(BOW # 524)

Thanksgiving (ad from Book of Worship) (**Bold is spoken by congregation**)

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth. In love you made us for yourself; and when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, your love remained steadfast. You bid your faithful people cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the Easter feast, that, renewed by your Word and Sacraments and fervent in prayer and works of justice and mercy, we may come to the fullness of grace that you have prepared for those who love you. And so, with your people on

earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ, whom you sent in the fullness of time to redeem the world. He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in our likeness. He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. He took upon himself our sin and death and offered himself, a perfect sacrifice for the sin of the whole world.

By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit. And so, in remembrance of these mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and cup. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. **Amen.**

Bread and Cup

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [Take and eat]

When the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." [Take and drink]

Prayer Lord, our deep desire is that our lives may be pure as candle fire. Let our every breath dispel the world's gloom, our spirits glow so brightly that darkness meets its doom, may we be drawn to learning as a moth is drawn to the candle's

burning -- that our hearts and lives may remain pliable in your hands – devoted to serving for the sake of making a positive difference in our world. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Music We end where we started. Recognizing our sin that makes us unworthy to be in God's presence, but now we also recognize the cross as a symbol of Christ's dying – and undying – love for us that allows us the privilege to stand with Jesus and abide with him in the presence of the Father. Let's stand if comfortable and sing...

Beneath the Cross of Jesus

Words: Elizabeth C. Clephane, 1872 Music: Frederick C. Maker, 1881

1. Beneath the cross of Jesus I fain would take my stand,
the shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land;
a home within the wilderness, a rest upon the way,
from the burning of the noontide heat, and the burden of the day.

2. Upon that cross of Jesus mine eye at times can see
the very dying form of One who suffered there for me;
and from my stricken heart with tears two wonders I confess:
the wonders of redeeming love and my unworthiness.

3. I take, O cross, thy shadow for my abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine than the sunshine of his face;
content to let the world go by, to know no gain nor loss,
my sinful self my only shame, my glory all the cross.

Blessing Serve your God with patience as passion. Be deliberate in enacting your faith. Be steadfast in celebrating the Spirit's power. And may peace be your way in the world. Amen.